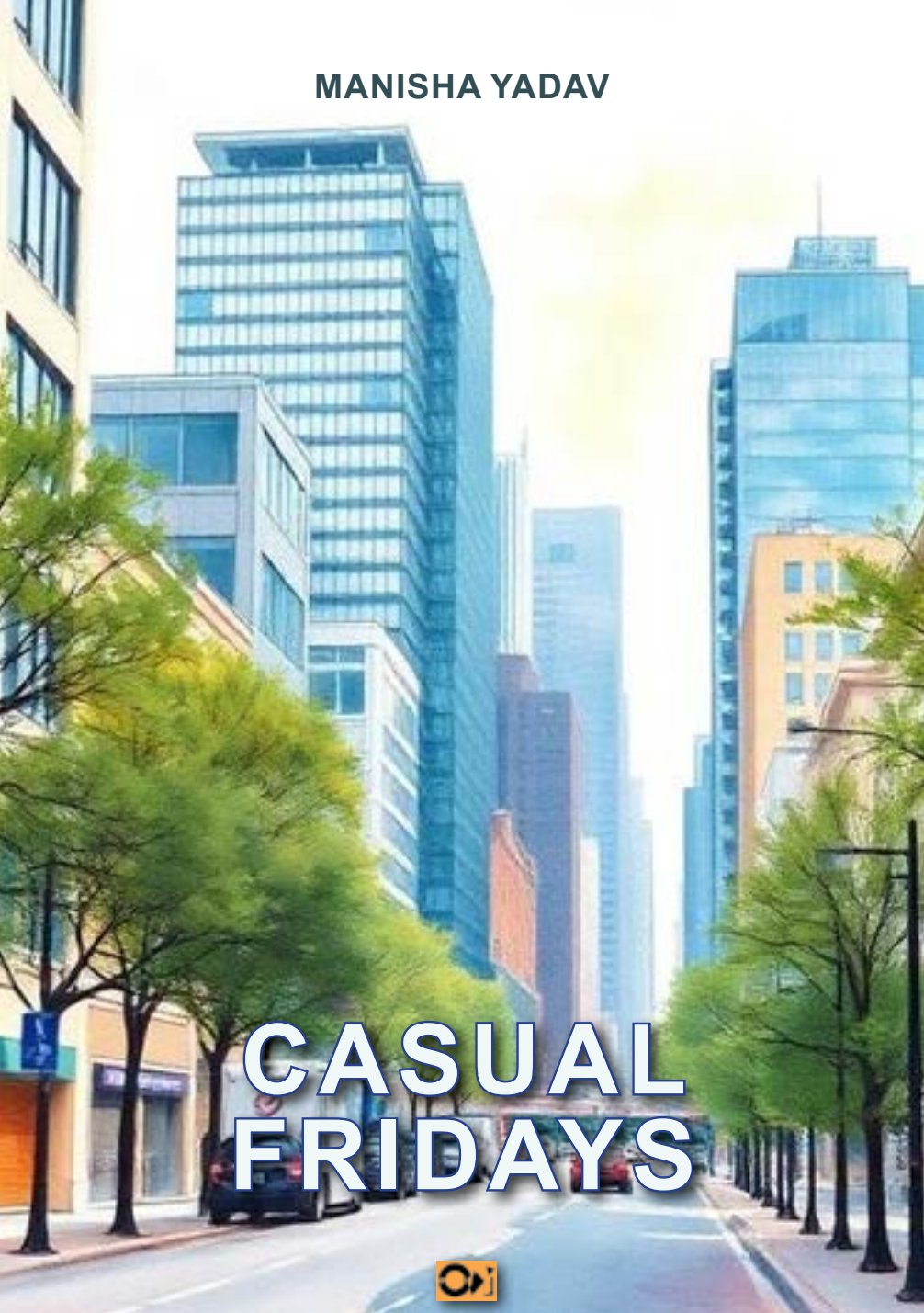
MANISHA YADAV



CASUAL FRIDAYS

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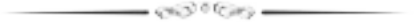
Manisha Yadav

Casual Fridays



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It was a Tuesday morning, and the conference room hummed with the usual routine. The scent of fresh coffee mingled with the faint aroma of glazed donuts, comforting and predictable. Peter, the HR manager, stood at the front of the room, adjusting his glasses, his palms slightly damp, though no one would have known. His hands always shook a little, a fact he'd long since accepted. He made a point of pretending he wasn't nervous as he glanced at his notes, knowing that everyone was watching him. Everyone was always watching him.

"We've been talking about it for a while," Peter began, his voice pitched just a little higher than usual. He cleared his throat, cleared it again. "The company's growing, and we've been stuck in this rigid, formal structure for too long. We need to evolve, be more… approachable. Maybe it's time for a more relaxed approach ...casual Fridays, casual everything."

He gave a nervous laugh. “Let’s see if it boosts morale.”

There was a pause. Everyone shifted in their chairs, some chewing their donuts, some staring at their phones, some looking expectantly at Peter, waiting for him to continue. It was always like this when Peter proposed something new, an awkward silence, a waiting game.

“Casual Fridays?” Julie from marketing said, breaking the silence. Her tone was sceptical, but not outright dismissive. She was the one who always seemed to challenge Peter, not because she disliked him, but because she was never afraid to speak up. “So, like... no suits? Is that really going to change anything?”

Peter’s face flushed slightly, and he shuffled his notes nervously. “Well…” He hesitated. “It’s not just about clothes. It’s about culture. We want to encourage openness, honesty. Less hierarchy. More collaboration.”

The words hung in the air, more unsteady than intended. He looked up; hoping someone would bite, someone would nod in agreement, offer a reassuring smile, maybe even a little applause.

Julie, though, remained unmoved. “Honesty?” she repeated, raising an eyebrow. “You mean, we just tell people what we think? Because some of us have... opinions about how this place runs.” Her eyes darted around the room, as if daring someone to challenge her.

Peter straightened, unsure of how to react. “Exactly. That’s it. Openness. No more pretending everything’s fine when it’s not.” He tried to sound confident but it was more of a plea than a statement.

There was a slight, uncomfortable shifting in the room. Julie’s gaze didn’t soften. She was sharp, direct, and always a little too honest for Peter’s taste. The tension in the room grew palpable.

At that moment, Charlie, the new hire from the tech team, chimed in. He was seated near the back of the room, his fingers tapping nervously against his coffee mug. He hadn’t said much since he’d started a few weeks ago, but today, he seemed eager to prove something, though Peter couldn’t tell what. “So… we’re actually going to tell people what we really think? Like… honestly?” His voice cracked on the last word, betraying his own unease.

Peter turned to him, suddenly hopeful. “Exactly,” he said, the word coming out more sharply than he’d intended. “It’s a fresh start. No more holding back. We want to get to the heart of things.”

“I’m just saying,” Charlie continued, still tapping his fingers, “sometimes people don’t need to hear everything. I mean, is it really productive to...” He trailed off, the words hanging awkwardly in the air.

Peter tried to maintain his composure. “Charlie’s right. This isn’t about being cruel or unprofessional. It’s about fostering an environment where we feel safe enough to speak up, to voice concerns without fear of judgment.” He looked around the table, gauging reactions. No one seemed entirely convinced, but no one outright disagreed either.

“Well, what kind of honesty are we talking about?” Julie asked, her voice low but biting. “Because, you know, there are things I’ve been thinking about… but if we’re going to ‘be honest,’ let’s just say it could get uncomfortable.”

Peter glanced at his notes, feeling the weight of her words. He wasn’t ready for this, but it was too late to backtrack. The idea was already out there. “I think it’ll be good for us,” he said, though even he wasn’t

sure anymore. "Trust me. It'll be a positive shift. We'll be better for it."

The silence that followed felt like it might last forever. Peter's pulse quickened. The idea had sounded so much better when he'd written it down in his office, all neatly typed and packaged. But now, with the room full of questioning eyes, it felt fragile, as if it could shatter with a single misstep.

The room seemed to hold its breath as Julie leaned back in her chair, folding her arms, an inscrutable smile tugging at the corners of her mouth. "Well," she said, breaking the silence at last, "if you really want honesty, Peter, I think we're going to need a new coffee machine. This one's broken half the time, and it's not like we haven't mentioned it." Her voice was casual, but there was something about the way she said it, too nonchalant, too biting, that made Peter's stomach drop.

A ripple of uneasy laughter spread through the room, and Peter felt his heart sink further.

"Yeah," Charlie piped up, eager now, "and those 'team-building' exercises? They're kind of a joke, don't you think? I mean, honestly, how many of us actually feel closer after doing them?"

The words hit harder than he expected. The laughter subsided, and all eyes were on Peter.

"Well, uh, yeah, I mean…" He struggled to regain control of the conversation, but it was slipping fast. "Maybe we can look into... improving those things," he stammered, his usual smoothness gone. "It's just, you know, the whole..."

Julie interrupted him. "And what about all the 'company values' speeches? How many times have we heard about 'innovation' and 'integrity' while the company does everything to avoid paying for actual training programs? It's all a performance. A bunch of meaningless words."

Peter blinked, a hot flush rising up his neck. He had spent hours crafting those company values speeches, believing they were inspiring. He felt suddenly exposed, like a puppet whose strings were being cut.

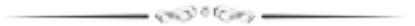
The room fell into an uncomfortable quiet again. Julie wasn't done, though. She leaned forward, her elbows on the table, her voice low but cutting. "I mean, you want honesty, Peter? Here it is: this place is stuck. Stagnant. And no amount of casual Fridays or 'openness' is going to change that. Maybe the problem

isn't with us, but with the way you've been running things."

Peter's face went pale, and his hands trembled again. He didn't know how to respond. Everything he had hoped for in this meeting, an open, honest conversation, was unravelling in a way he couldn't control.

"Well, we'll look into that," he said, his voice barely above a whisper. "I'll… I'll take your feedback seriously. I'm glad we're being honest."

But as the meeting ended and the employees trickled out of the room, Peter could feel the weight of their words pressing on him. The honesty they had promised to foster had cracked open a door he wasn't sure he was ready to walk through. And as he stood alone in the conference room, the silence that filled the space seemed to mock him, a reminder that some things, some truths are better left unsaid.



The first "casual" meeting took place on a Wednesday, a week after Peter's announcement. He had promised this would be a turning point for the office.

A new chapter. But as he stood in front of the conference room, the familiar walls now decorated with posters urging "open communication" and "honesty is key," he could feel the weight of it. The irony wasn't lost on anyone.

Peter's shirt clung a little too tightly to his back, beads of sweat forming along his hairline. He adjusted his glasses, cleared his throat, then looked down at the sheet of notes he'd written out the night before, careful not to make eye contact with the people filtering in.

They took their seats, some casually leaning back in their chairs, others fidgeting, unsure of what this new meeting format would bring. It was supposed to be a "safe space"—a chance to let down their guard, to throw off the shackles of corporate politeness. But Peter wasn't sure anyone really wanted that.

He'd hoped for easy breezes and warm, feel-good feedback. What he had failed to predict, however, was the undercurrent of resentment that had been brewing under the surface for months. Maybe longer.

Peter could feel it now, the weight of it pressing in from all sides, almost as if the very air in the room

was dense with expectation. He opened his mouth, ready to speak, and then stopped.

"Remember," he began, his voice a little too high-pitched, "today we try something new. Think of it as a team-building exercise. Speak your mind. Be candid. No judgment. Just... honesty."

There was an awkward pause, and Peter, trying to steer things in the right direction, flashed a nervous smile.

"Isn't that what we've all been missing here? Openness? Transparency?" He shuffled his papers nervously. "You can say anything. Let it out."

Charlie, from the tech team, was the first to break the silence. He was new, eager, perhaps too eager for this strange brand of transparency. He leaned forward, his hand cupping his coffee mug like it was a lifeline.

"Okay," Charlie said with a half-smile, looking around the room, "this might be a little weird, but I have something to say. Who came up with the idea for the new coffee machine? Because it sounds like a great idea, until you realize it only brews two cups at a time and takes fifteen minutes to warm up."

Peter blinked, taken aback. The coffee machine had been one of his proudest moments. He'd spent weeks researching it, checking reviews, trying to find the best balance of functionality and cost. It had seemed like such a small thing, an easy fix. But now, with Charlie's words hanging in the air, he felt ridiculous.

"I... um..." Peter hesitated. "I thought it was an improvement."

"No," Charlie pressed on, shaking his head with a mock seriousness. "It's not. And it's a waste of money. Whoever decided that needs to be more honest with themselves."

A moment of stunned silence stretched between them. Peter could feel the blood rushing to his face, but he did his best to keep his composure.

"Well…" he began, trying to recover, "we can definitely look into that. I thought, you know, it would—"

"Wait, wait," Julie from marketing interrupted, her voice light but cutting. "Since we're being honest... I have something to say, too. These email chains. Seriously. Every single thing gets emailed to everyone. It's exhausting. We're all working in the same building, for God's sake. Does anyone else feel like we're

drowning in emails about things that don't even concern us?"

Peter shifted uncomfortably, his throat tight. He had thought that the email chains were a way to keep everyone in the loop, but now, hearing it from Julie, who had been here longer than most, it sounded like a pointless burden. The room felt smaller all of a sudden, like the walls were closing in.

"Okay, let's try to keep it constructive," Peter said, wiping his brow, wishing he could just make the discomfort go away.

But the floodgates had already opened.

Susan, from operations, leaned forward, crossing her arms. "I've always thought the office layout is stupid. You've got the teams in opposite corners. Nobody knows what anyone else is doing. It's isolating. If we're really going to be 'honest,' maybe we should start with a floor plan overhaul."

Peter's face was starting to burn. He couldn't remember the last time he'd felt this exposed, this small. "I... I'll make a note of that," he stammered, flipping through his notebook to write down the comment. But the words felt hollow. Everyone was

already looking at him as if they'd heard enough.

"I second that," Charlie added quickly, almost too quickly. "And while we're at it, let's talk about how Peter micromanages the coffee machine schedule. No one needs a spreadsheet to decide when to brew a pot of coffee."

Peter's throat tightened, his breath coming in shallow gasps. "I thought it was, uh, I thought it was a good way to keep things organized." The words tasted wrong in his mouth.

"I don't even drink coffee," said Mark from sales, his voice too dry for humour. "But I still get the damn emails about it. Every single week."

Julie smiled at Peter, but it wasn't kind. "Oh, and speaking of emails... have you ever considered how much of a waste of time the 'company values' meetings are? I mean, they're nice, but nobody takes them seriously. Everyone just nods along and pretends like they care."

Peter felt like the floor had just dropped out from under him. He swallowed hard, but the words kept coming. They were like water, unstoppable once they started flowing.

"That's true," Charlie added. "It's all performance. Just tell us what we're supposed to do and trust us to do it. Stop with the speeches."

Peter opened his mouth, but no words came out. It was as if he'd forgotten how to speak, how to respond.

Julie raised her hand, like they were in a classroom, and Peter's heart sank as she continued. "Also, I've got to say it... the way Peter keeps over-explaining things. It's like he thinks we're all idiots."

And that was it. The last straw. Peter felt the colour drain from his face, his fingers cold and clammy. He looked around the room, searching for something, a lifeline, a sympathetic glance, but all he found were faces that had turned from polite curiosity to open criticism.

"I... I didn't know…" Peter's voice cracked. "I didn't know you felt that way." His throat was dry, each word an effort.

"Oh, come on," Julie said, her voice suddenly too loud. "You're always trying to smooth things over. You act like we can't think for ourselves."

"I... no, that's not what I meant," Peter mumbled, trying to backpedal. But it was too late. The words

were out, and now they had a life of their own. They hung in the air like a bad smell, suffocating the room.

The uncomfortable silence was deafening now. Julie leaned back in her chair, arms crossed, eyes narrowed. Her mouth curled into a small, almost smug smile.

"Isn't this what you wanted, Peter?" she asked softly. "Honesty?"

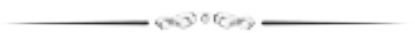
Peter could feel his body betraying him, his knees weak. He had no idea how to recover from this. He hadn't expected this—hadn't realized that giving them a voice, encouraging them to be "honest," would tear open the fragile veneer of civility that had held them all together.

Julie's eyes remained fixed on him, and for a moment, Peter felt utterly alone in the room, like a character in a play that had just been forgotten by the writer.

"I... I think we've made enough points for today," Peter said, his voice unsteady. He closed his notes, but it was an empty gesture, a feeble attempt to put the pieces of his dignity back together.

As the meeting ended, people filtered out slowly, as if reluctant to leave but not sure what else to do. Peter stayed behind, staring at the empty chairs, the posters on the wall mocking him with their hopeful slogans. The door clicked shut behind him, and for a long moment, Peter stood there, paralyzed. He'd wanted honesty, yes. But not this.

Not like this.



The air in the office had changed a tension so thick it was nearly visible. Peter could feel it every time he walked past someone. The polite nods that had once been the default gesture now felt awkward and strained. Everyone seemed to know something he didn't, something that was hanging just out of reach, hovering in the silence that followed each failed attempt at normal conversation.

The next day, the office was divided into uneasy factions. Some were still giddy, riding the adrenaline of their newfound honesty, while others like Julie were visibly bruised by it. It was hard to ignore the shift. The wall between employees, once a polite for-

mality, now felt like a gulf no one could cross without triggering some kind of embarrassing disaster.

Peter moved through the day with a feeling of vertigo, as if the ground had shifted beneath him but he hadn't yet realized the full extent of it. His morning had been a series of failed attempts to make small talk. His usual "How's everyone doing today?" was met with stiff smiles and awkward glances, as if he had just asked a trick question. The laughter that had once sounded like a comforting backdrop to office life now seemed forced, like it was trying too hard to fill a space that had suddenly grown too large.

By noon, he was already tired. The last thing he wanted to do was go to the breakroom, but it was too late to avoid it. When he stepped inside, the chatter seemed to stop for a beat, only to pick up again with an undercurrent of something… different. He noticed that everyone was sitting a little farther apart, like they were waiting for the next awkward thing to happen.

Julie was leaning against the counter, picking at her salad in a way that made Peter feel like an intruder. She looked up at him, her eyes narrowed with a mix of concern and something else, disappointment, maybe.

"Peter," she said, her voice low, "I think you might have just created a monster."

Peter froze, the mug of coffee in his hand feeling suddenly too heavy. "What do you mean?" he asked, though he already knew.

Julie raised an eyebrow. She was one of the few who had actually seen through his veneer of cheerful optimism. "I mean, everyone's being honest now. But honestly? It's awful. You gave them an inch and they took a mile."

Peter set his mug down, trying to act casual, but he couldn't mask the sinking feeling in his stomach. "I didn't think it would go like this."

"You're not the only one," she replied, her voice flat, and Peter watched as she took a sip from a bottle of salad dressing, a slight grimace on her face as she realized it wasn't her iced tea. She seemed too tired to care. "You've ruined any chance of us having a normal conversation again. I'm never going to look at Charlie the same way. Not after his whole 'coffee machine' rant."

Peter turned his gaze across the room to where Charlie was holding court with the younger employ-

ees. His loud laughter echoed against the walls, a stark contrast to the quiet unease that hung over everyone else. His coffee machine rant had been the catalyst. It had started off as a harmless joke, but somewhere in the middle, it had turned into a venomous tirade.

"I'm serious, Peter," Julie continued, pushing a strand of hair behind her ear. "That coffee machine might have been your pet project, but for Charlie, it was just a symbol. A way for him to tear something down and feel better about himself. And now, every time I walk past him, I can't help but picture his face when he was complaining about it. That's not something I'm going to forget anytime soon."

Peter swallowed, guilt tightening around his chest. "What do I do? I can't just call it off. They'll never trust me again."

Julie shook her head, a sad smile tugging at the corner of her mouth. "Peter, you've got to stop trying to fix everything. This… this isn't a corporate problem. This is a people problem. People shouldn't be this honest. Ever."

Peter's fingers gripped the edge of the counter. "But I thought honesty was a good thing. I thought it would—"

"Stop," she interrupted, holding up a hand. "You can't force people to be honest. And when you try, it just exposes things that should stay buried. You've cracked open Pandora's box. Now we all have to deal with the fallout."

Peter winced at the word. Fallout. It felt like the perfect description for what was happening. He had opened the floodgates, and now there was no going back. People who had never before shared their true thoughts were suddenly letting loose and the results were… unsettling.

Across the room, Charlie let out another loud, contagious laugh, this time accompanied by a dramatic gesture as he flung his arms out, making a show of his thoughts on the office's air conditioning system. The others laughed with him, and Peter felt a stab of something sharp, embarrassment, resentment, maybe even fear.

Julie had already turned back to her salad dressing, her attention clearly elsewhere. "I'm telling you, Peter," she said, her voice a little quieter now, "it's too late to put the lid back on the jar. People are going to be themselves now. And you'll have to live with it."

Peter's shoulders slumped as he watched Charlie's animated discussion, a sick realization sinking in. Julie was right. He had never truly understood how deeply people would take the opportunity to reveal themselves. What he thought was a harmless experiment had unravelled everything, exposing fault lines between them all. What he hadn't anticipated was how little he knew about the people he worked with, how much anger, resentment, and dissatisfaction were simmering beneath their surface smiles.

"I thought I could change things," Peter muttered, more to himself than to Julie. "Make it better."

Julie didn't respond at first, but when she did, her tone was different, softer, almost resigned. "Some things aren't meant to be fixed, Peter."

Peter nodded slowly, but the words felt like a weight on his chest. He hadn't just changed things. He had shattered the illusion that they were a cohesive team. Everyone now had a voice, but instead of unity, it had sparked division. People were no longer afraid to speak their minds, but at what cost?

The conversation seemed to have slowed to a halt, but Peter wasn't sure whether that was a good thing or not. It was as if the air had thickened with all the

unspoken truths that were now laid bare. He could feel the pressure, the uncertainty. And when Julie stood up, grabbing her salad and heading back to her desk, Peter was left alone with the bitter taste of failure in his mouth.

"Peter?"

He turned at the sound of his name. It was Mark from sales, standing by the breakroom door, an uneasy look on his face. "Can I talk to you for a sec?"

Peter nodded, though he didn't feel like talking to anyone right now. He was too exposed. Too raw.

Mark hesitated for a moment before stepping inside. "Look, about the meeting yesterday…" His voice trailed off, as if he were trying to find the right words.

Peter raised an eyebrow. "What about it?"

Mark shifted uncomfortably, glancing around as though the walls might be listening. "I just wanted to say… well, I didn't think it was really necessary to bring up the whole coffee machine thing. I mean, it's not that big of a deal."

Peter felt the sting of the words before Mark even finished his sentence. It wasn't the coffee machine. It

was everything else. All the things that people had been holding back, only to spill them out once they thought they had permission.

Mark seemed to read the look on Peter's face and quickly added, "But I don't think it's something we can take back, right? It's out there now."

Peter didn't know how to respond.

"No," he muttered, his voice barely audible. "It's not. It's all out there now."

And just like that, another small piece of the office's fragile ecosystem had cracked. There was no going back now. The truth had been unleashed, and Peter, for all his best intentions, had only made it worse.

Peter's gaze moved to the coffee machine, sitting innocently on the counter. He thought about how something so simple, so inconsequential, had become the metaphor for everything that had gone wrong. He didn't have a solution anymore. He didn't have a plan. He had only questions, and no answers.

Three months had passed, and Peter had hoped things would settle down. They didn't.

The office, once a place of muted politeness and muted tensions, now felt like a battlefield where the skirmishes had never stopped. The lingering effects of the "casual work environment" experiment were palpable. There were no longer the muted smiles or subtle glances exchanged in passing. Now, when people met each other in the hallways, they looked at each other with suspicion, as though the tiniest slip of the tongue might trigger another round of brutal honesty.

Peter sat at his desk, staring at the calendar on his screen. The dates blurred in front of him, but it was the reminder for the next team-building exercise that caught his eye. Another one. It was supposed to fix everything, the desperate attempt to repair the damage. As if some carefully orchestrated game or exercise could undo the months of fallout.

His finger hovered over the "delete" button, but he didn't press it. He couldn't. It was all he had left, a hollow gesture that gave the illusion of control.

Peter glanced up as he heard the familiar sound of Charlie's voice, raised in indignation, filtering through the hallway.

"Can you believe this? Overpriced snacks!" Charlie was ranting, gesturing wildly to someone who Peter couldn't see. "I mean, they're charging us *five dollars* for a bottle of water. The same water we can get for free in the break room!"

Peter closed his eyes for a moment. Three months ago, that would have been something funny to joke about. But now? It felt hollow. It felt like everything had become a complaint, a grievance, an accusation, all wrapped in the guise of "honesty." There was no nuance left. Everything was bare, exposed, and raw. And no one liked it.

Julie hadn't been to a single meeting in weeks. Peter had tried reaching out to her several times—casual check-ins, at first. "How are you doing?" he would ask his voice a little too light, trying to coax her back into the fold. She always had an excuse. A prior engagement. An emergency. Her silence, however, spoke louder than any explanation. She was avoiding him—avoiding the office. Avoiding the fallout.

Peter let out a slow breath; staring at the blank document he had open on his screen. Another email draft, another attempt to "reconnect" the team. He rubbed his eyes, the weight of the task pressing down

on him. He had started drafting them days ago, emails full of motivational quotes and uplifting words, as if that could somehow heal the fractures. He would add lines like, "Let's rebuild our foundation," or "Together, we can grow stronger." But the words felt empty in his fingers. He deleted them each time. What was the point? Could you really rebuild something that had already crumbled?

A light knock on his office door snapped him from his thoughts. He didn't need to look up to know who it was.

"Come in," Peter said, his voice lacking the usual warmth.

Julie stepped inside, her expression unreadable. She had been in the office more frequently over the past week, but she was distant, a ghost in the halls. She hadn't acknowledged him in days.

"Peter," she said, her voice flat. She took a step inside and closed the door behind her, the sound of it clicking echoing too loudly in the otherwise quiet room.

He stood up from his desk, trying to force a smile, but it felt wrong. "Julie," he said, the word hanging

between them like a question. “I’ve been meaning to check in with you.”

Julie didn’t return the smile. “I think we both know there’s nothing left to check in about, do we?”

Peter’s stomach twisted. “I... what do you mean?”

“I mean,” Julie continued, her voice soft but sharp, “the damage is done. We broke something. We thought we could handle it, but we were wrong. And I can’t keep pretending it’s okay.”

Peter’s eyes widened, a flicker of panic rising in his chest. He opened his mouth to speak, but no words came out.

Julie walked around his desk, stopping just a few feet from him. “Do you remember when you asked me what we were going to do after the meeting? After the honesty thing?” she asked, her tone laced with a bitter edge. “I told you we would never go back. We couldn’t.”

Peter nodded, his voice low. “I remember.”

“I was right,” she said quietly, “And I hate that I was.”

Her words landed heavily between them. Peter felt the weight of them, as though they had cracked the very floor he stood on. He could feel the cracks beneath his feet, growing wider with every word she spoke.

Julie folded her arms across her chest, as though bracing herself for something she wasn't sure she could handle. "The truth is," she continued, her voice barely above a whisper, "the truth is we've all become strangers. I look at the people I work with, and I don't know them anymore. I don't even know *myself* anymore."

Peter's heart sank, the emptiness in her voice pulling him deeper into the hole he had created. "I didn't mean for this to happen. I just thought..." He paused, not knowing how to finish the sentence, as if any words he could offer would only make things worse.

Julie gave him a tired, resigned look. "I know what you thought. You thought honesty would fix everything, but it didn't. It just gave us all the freedom to tear each other apart. And now, we're all walking around with the pieces of our lives on display. And no one knows how to put them back together."

Peter swallowed hard, his throat dry. “What do we do now?” The words felt like a plea.

Julie didn’t answer right away. She stared at the floor for a moment, gathering herself. When she looked up again, her gaze was steady, but there was a flicker of something in her eyes, regret, maybe. “We leave. We leave this behind.”

Peter’s stomach tightened. “Leave?”

“You’ve seen it, Peter. It’s over. We can’t go back to pretending that everything’s fine. And I think you know that. So, we leave. We move on.” She hesitated, her voice dropping. “We’ve all already started leaving, in our own ways.”

The finality of her words hit him like a slap. Peter had always imagined that people would return, that somehow, there would be a resolution, a moment of clarity that would heal everything. But there wouldn’t be. There was nothing left to salvage here.

Julie turned toward the door, her steps slow. “Goodbye, Peter.”

He didn’t stop her. He didn’t know how. He couldn’t find the words to change anything.

As she left, Peter sat back down at his desk, the weight of her departure settling around him like a fog. His fingers hovered over his keyboard, but nothing felt right. No email, no message, no motivational speech could fix this.

He glanced around the empty office, the once-bustling space now eerily quiet. No laughter. No chatter. Just the distant hum of fluorescent lights. He leaned back in his chair, closing his eyes for a moment, and let out a slow breath.

"Maybe next time," he whispered to himself, "we'll try something a little less honest."

But deep down, he knew better.

It was too late. And he had no one left to blame but himself.

The End

Casual Fridays

Manisha Yadav

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MANISHA YADAV

Manisha Devi. A California mom of two whirlwind daughters, spends her days dodging Lego bricks and deciphering the intricate social dramas unfolding at the park. Fueled by caffeine and a healthy dose of cynicism, she channels her observations into witty short stories about the eccentric characters she encounters in her daily life, from the overly-enthusiastic dog walker to the woman who whispers secrets to her bonsai tree.

CASUAL FRIDAYS